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## AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND POLITICS IN VERMONT

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VERMONT is unforgettably associated with the development of agricultural education in the United States because of the contributions of one of her greatest sons, Justin S. Morrill. The land grant colleges which Morrill sponsored have exerted immeasurable influence on rural life in the forty-eight states through the men and women who have received their training in them and through such closely cooperating agencies as the Agricultural Experiment Stations and the Extension Services. Yet, the achievements of Justin Morrill in the national Congress should no longer blind the American historian to the record of troubles experienced by the Agricultural College in Morrill's home state. The progress of agricultural education in Vermont has been marked by many unhappy episodes and bitter political controversies.

In the years of Morrill's growth to manhood important educational changes were taking place which helped to lay the foundations for America's remarkable system of agricultural education. Everywhere, there were signs of increasing interest in education of a more practical nature. Many of the older classical colleges were broadening their curricula to include more courses in the natural sciences. Harvard and Yale, for example, organized separate scientific schools in the 1840's. Moreover, as early as 1824, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute had been founded in Troy, New York, to give instruction primarily in the natural sciences and engineering. Another important sign of the new spirit in education was the emergence of manual labor schools in many of the states—emphasizing practical instruction, especially in the mechanic arts. Waterville College (Colby) in Maine, Oberlin College in Ohio, and several other colleges, set up such manual labor departments in the 1830's.

Even more significant were the beginnings made in the teaching of agriculture and the establishment of agricultural academies and colleges. Among the classical colleges, Yale and Amherst were offering courses in agricultural chemistry by the middle of the century. In 1822, the Gardiner Lyceum was incorporated in Gardiner, Maine,

and, during the ten years of its existence, offered instruction in agriculture as well as in other practical subjects. One of the most successful agricultural academies, in this period, was the Cream Hill Agricultural School founded in 1845, in West Cornwall, Connecticut. The Cream Hill School offered to students, for twenty-four years, "both scientific and practical instructions in agriculture and horticulture" with an opportunity for each pupil to master on his own plot, of "about 130 square yards," the arts of "laying out, planting, and application of manures." Another notable step in the development of agricultural education was the incorporation, in 1846, of the Farmers' College near Cincinnati, Ohio. This institution offered work in agriculture and horticulture and conducted an experimental farm, although, by the eve of the Civil War, its funds from private sources were not sufficient to maintain the relatively expensive work of instruction and experimentation in agriculture. In New York, a "People's College," eventually located at Havana, was incorporated in 1853. However, the difficulty of raising funds from private sources made it impossible for the "People's College" to carry out its ambitious program of instruction in agriculture and the mechanic arts. More fortunate was the Agricultural College incorporated in Michigan, in 1855. With state aid, this institution was able to begin operations in 1857 and eventually became the beneficiary of the federal land grant fund in that state.<sup>1</sup>

In Vermont, there were similar influences at work. Evidence of the growing interest in agricultural education may be found in a resolution of the Vermont House of Representatives, in 1849, suggesting an inquiry "into the expediency of establishing . . . a department or school for the instruction of young men in those branches of natural sciences which have an immediate bearing upon the profession of agriculture."<sup>2</sup> The Senate, however, was not in a similar inquiring mood at the time. Five years later, on the other hand, the legislature enacted "an act to encourage the study of the Science of Agriculture in the Common Schools." This law authorized the Governor of Vermont to purchase one copy of Waring's *Elements of Agriculture* for each town. The act stipulated that the superintendent of schools in each town was to examine the Waring Text and determine "what number, if any" were needed for the schools of the town.<sup>3</sup> There is no evidence, however, that any significant demand for agricultural textbooks appeared in the towns of Vermont at this time.

In the meantime, other notable developments in practical education were taking place in Vermont. In 1819, Captain Alden Partridge, a

West Point graduate and Professor of mathematics and engineering at the United States Military Academy for ten years, founded, in his native town of Norwich, Vermont, the "American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy" (reduced to "Norwich University" in 1834). In this new institution, much stress was laid upon mathematics and the sciences. The first catalogue listed agriculture as one of the courses taught but an examination of the textbooks used at the Academy suggests that such agriculture as may have been taught probably came indirectly in the courses in botany, geology, and chemistry.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, Captain Partridge had some well developed views on education which he hoped to see adopted on a national scale. In 1841, he presented a memorial to Congress, praying for the "establishment of a general system of education for the benefit of the youth of this nation." In this memorial, he suggested that Congress appropriate \$40,000,000, to be paid by annual installments out of the proceeds of the sale of public lands, for educational purposes. This money was to be distributed among the states, in proportion to their representation in Congress, in such a manner that the smallest states should have at least one institution and the largest five. The seminaries to be established on this plan should be "non-partisan" and non-sectarian and should offer the broadest possible course of study including agriculture, manufacturing, commerce and military training.

Partridge's proposal is believed to be the first definite one to Congress for the use of the proceeds of the sale of public lands for distribution to the states in proportion to their representation in Congress in order to endow institutions which should offer a general education. It is significant, also, that Justin S. Morrill's home was in Strafford, only twelve miles from Norwich, and that his partner in mercantile business, from 1831 to 1855, was Jedekiah Hyde Harris who was a trustee of Norwich University from 1834 until his death in 1855. President Charles Plumley of Norwich University asserted, much later, that "Alden Partridge used to visit Justin Morrill when on his tramps and hiking expeditions and discussed with him his educational theories."<sup>5</sup>

At about the same time, other efforts were being made to secure federal support for agricultural education. In 1838, Charles L. Fleischman, a naturalized citizen from Bavaria and a graduate of the Royal Agricultural School of Bavaria, had presented to Congress a memorial urging the establishment of schools in the United States in which instruction would be given in mathematics, surveying, mechanics, civil engineering, chemistry, zoology, botany, mineralogy, geology,

“the veterinary art; and agriculture in all its branches.” In a second memorial, the following year, Fleischman suggested the use of the Smithsonian bequest for agricultural schools which should have experimental farms and workshops. A similar recommendation concerning the use of the Smithsonian legacy was made by the United States Agricultural Society at its first convention in 1841. The chairman of this new and short-lived national agricultural society was Henry L. Ellsworth, Commissioner of Patents, who was laying the foundations of a national department of agriculture through the distribution of seeds and the diffusion of practical and scientific information to American farmers from the Patent Office. In 1848, John S. Skinner, editor of *The American Farmer*, petitioned the United States Senate to make “an appropriation, to be applied, under the direction of the state governments . . . to the establishment of institutions for instruction in geology, mineralogy, and vegetable and animal physiology; in civil engineering, as applied to road making, bridge building, and other rural architecture”; and also to instruction in “the mechanical principles on which depend the labor-saving properties and efficiency of agricultural implements and machinery.”<sup>6</sup>

Also influential in the preparation of public opinion was the widely circulated report on agricultural education in Europe, written by Professor Edward Hitchcock of Amherst College. Professor Hitchcock had served as a member of a five-man commission created by the legislature of Massachusetts to consider the subject of agricultural education in relation to the State's responsibilities. Hitchcock, in pursuance of his duties, went to Europe where he made a thorough study of agricultural institutions. On his return, he prepared an elaborate report of his investigations including brief accounts of 352 schools in different European countries. One of his principal conclusions as a result of his European study was that such schools usually failed unless they received sufficient aid from the government.<sup>7</sup>

Great impetus was given also to this movement for nationally-supported education by the untiring efforts of Professor Jonathan Baldwin Turner of Illinois College. Professor Turner, from the beginning of his residence in Illinois, in 1833, devoted himself to the education of farmers and mechanics in schools offering practical studies. His ideas matured into his “Plan for an Industrial University,” read to a farmers' convention in Illinois in 1851. This plan outlined the organization of a state university to emphasize agricultural and mechanical education. Turner's ideas received wide publicity since they were presented, in whole or in part, in the *Prairie Farmer*, in the

United States Patent Office Report for 1851, and in many newspapers, including Greeley's *New York Tribune*. Shortly afterward, an "Industrial League of the State of Illinois" was formed, with Turner as director, to promote such a project. Memorials were presented to the Illinois legislature suggesting an appeal to Congress "for an appropriation of public lands for each state in the union for the appropriate endowment of universities for the liberal education of the industrial classes in their several pursuits." Resolutions of such a nature were adopted by both houses of the Illinois legislature in 1853 and presented to the Congress in 1854. No action, however, was taken by Congress during that session.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, when Justin S. Morrill began his career in Congress, the movement for national support of agricultural education had made much headway already. There is no indication that he had any direct connection with any of these early attempts to promote public support of agricultural education, although there is considerable circumstantial evidence to suggest that he was interested in the subject before he began his Congressional career. His association with Judge Harris, Trustee of Norwich University, and the likelihood of his contacts with Captain Partridge has already been noted. In addition, his marriage, in 1851, to Ruth Barnell Swan, probably increased his interest in education since his wife had been a teacher in eastern Massachusetts and was familiar with the educational movements of that day.<sup>9</sup> Also, Morrill was a member of the Orange County Agricultural Society, where such questions were undoubtedly discussed.<sup>10</sup>

At any rate, three months after Justin Morrill took his seat in the House of Representatives (1855), he introduced a resolution recommending that "the Committee on Agriculture be requested to inquire into the expediency of establishing one or more national agricultural schools upon the basis of the naval and military schools, in order that one scholar from each Congressional district and two from each state at large may receive a scientific and practical education at the public expense." The resolution was objected to by a member from South Carolina and was not received. This resolution suggested a plan that was very different from the land grant college bill which was introduced by Morrill for the first time in the next session of Congress. What actually happened during the intervening months to change Morrill's ideas is not known. However, Morrill attended the meetings of the United States Agricultural Society in Washington in 1856 and 1857 as a delegate from Vermont. At both of these meetings, Professor Turner's plan for industrial universities supported by federal

land grants was discussed and endorsed by the Society. Although the published records of these meetings do not show that Morrill took any part in the discussion of Turner's plan, he must have had knowledge of it. Despite his failure to acknowledge the aid of others for the scheme incorporated in his bill, Morrill must have been influenced by the ideas of Turner and others connected with the movement for agricultural education.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever the source of his ideas, Justin Morrill, beginning with the session of Congress in 1857, worked doggedly to secure the passage of his land grant college bill. Success seemed almost certain in 1859 when the measure passed both houses of Congress, but all of the pressure of Turner and other influential friends of the measure failed to prevent President Buchanan's veto. During the campaign of 1860, Turner is supposed to have had a promise from Lincoln to sign a land grant college act and with the election of a new administration the prospects of the movement improved greatly. After considerable legislative maneuvering, a land grant college bill was passed finally by both houses of Congress and signed by President Lincoln, July 2, 1862.<sup>12</sup> This act provided for a grant, to each state, of thirty thousand acres of land, or its equivalent in land scrip, for each senator and representative in Congress. The money derived from the sale of the land or land scrip was to be used "to the endowment, support and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the states may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life." Moreover, the money received from the sale of land was to be used for educational purposes only, in view of the stipulation that, "No portion of said fund, nor the interest thereon, shall be applied, directly or indirectly, under any pretense whatever, to the purchase, erection, preservation, or repair of any building or buildings." However, a state was permitted to expend a sum not exceeding ten per cent of the amount received under the provisions of the act "for the purchase of lands for sites or experimental farms whenever authorized by the respective legislatures of said states."<sup>13</sup>

The legislature of Vermont responded quickly to the opportunity presented by the Morrill Act by authorizing, on October 29, 1862, the receipt of the land scrip available for Vermont and instructing the

Governor to receive proposals for donations of land, buildings and funds from the state or individuals for the purpose of establishing a college and to report to the next legislature.<sup>14</sup> This promptness on the part of the Vermont legislature was, however, no indication of any amount of enthusiastic interest in the State. As a matter of fact, there was an astonishing amount of indifference towards the Morrill Act in Morrill's home state even during the discussion of the measure in Congress. Dean Hills has observed that,

...not once did Vermont's leading newspaper, the *Burlington Free Press*, editorially or otherwise refer to this outstanding enactment, fathered by a Vermont Congressman, save for a brief reference, after the session had ended, to the acceptance resolution. This fact signifies nothing whatsoever except the utter lack of understanding of its far-reaching implications which were appreciated by but few . . ."<sup>15</sup>

Even after making allowances for preoccupation with the Civil War, such apathy seems extraordinary. Yet, even Morrill himself was to experience, in the bitterest fashion, this unconcern in his own state before a land grant college was actually established.

Governor John Gregory Smith, in fulfillment of the responsibility placed upon him by the legislature, made an ambitious proposal to the legislature of 1863 concerning the use of the land grant fund. He urged the General Assembly to consider a plan to unite the three existing institutions of higher learning in Vermont—Middlebury, Norwich and the University of Vermont—and to bestow the land grant fund upon the consolidated institution. Such a consolidation scheme had appeared in the report of the State Board of Education in September, 1863, one month before the meeting of the legislature. The author of the report and Secretary of the State Board of Education was John S. Adams, alumnus and Trustee of the University of Vermont and Governor Smith's classmate and fraternity brother. It is reasonable to suppose that Trustee Adams and Governor Smith had put their heads together over this proposition. A bill incorporating this suggestion was introduced in the legislature with the vigorous sponsorship of three legislators who were University of Vermont graduates. Moreover, the Board of Trustees of the University of Vermont met at Montpelier early in the legislative session and adopted resolutions proposed by Adams favoring consolidation. But Middlebury and Norwich were still to be heard from and it soon became apparent that there would be many difficulties in carrying out such a plan. President Bourne of Norwich and President Labaree of Middlebury informed the legislative committees on education that they foresaw

many obstacles to such a plan.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the legislature proceeded to enact a law, over the vigorous opposition of the representative from the town of Middlebury, which permitted the consolidation of the three schools as a preliminary to bestowing the land grant fund.<sup>17</sup>

The "Act to Incorporate the Vermont State University and Associated Colleges" provided that the three existing colleges in Vermont, or either one of them, might become united with the land grant institution and enjoy the income from the land grant fund subject to the conditions of the Act of Congress.<sup>18</sup> The Board of Trustees of the University of Vermont voted to unite with the land grant institution if the Act of 1863 would be amended "in respect to the required annual election of a President."<sup>19</sup> The Board of Trustees of Norwich University was badly split over the question of union and meetings were frequently "scenes of much excitement and even hard feelings." Ultimately, the faction favoring continuance of an independent institution<sup>20</sup> was able to prevail. Middlebury, as was expected, was violently opposed to the idea of union with the land grant college.<sup>21</sup>

By the time the next legislature convened, the opposition to the consolidation scheme was better organized. Several petitions were addressed to the General Assembly urging repeal of the Act of 1863 and the creation of a separate agricultural institution. Edwin Hammond, a successful sheep farmer in Middlebury, and some friends in other towns of Vermont, issued a broadside, addressed to the "Farmers and Mechanics of Vermont," demanding a separate agricultural college and insisting that such was the intent of the Morrill Act.<sup>22</sup> Governor Smith took the view, in his message to the legislature, that, considering the decision of the Trustees of the University of Vermont to unite with the Vermont State University, the plan for a State University was "realized." The legislature, however, did not share the governor's opinion, preferring to start afresh with a new act to establish a "Vermont Agricultural College." The Trustees of this new corporation were to be under the control of the legislature and the Governor was to be *ex-officio* member of the Board. This separate college could not legally operate "until valid and solvent subscriptions, to the amount of \$100,000," had been secured for the "endowment and other uses of the said college"; that the money had to be raised in a year's time.<sup>23</sup> The *Burlington Free Press*, always friendly to the University of Vermont, charged the legislature with "gross bad faith" in incorporating the Vermont Agricultural College

after the University of Vermont had accepted the conditions of the Act of 1863.<sup>24</sup>

It was in this atmosphere of conflict that the campaign to raise subscriptions for the Vermont Agricultural college began. Several large subscriptions were pledged, among them one by Justin Morrill for \$1,000 (or \$5,000 if the college should be located in his own town).<sup>25</sup> In addition, Morrill was chosen President of the Board of Trustees of this suppositional Vermont Agricultural College.<sup>26</sup> Despite these favorable beginnings, the campaign went badly. As a specialist on land grant colleges in the Federal Bureau of Education has observed, "It is a commentary on the strangeness of affairs that for one year this board combed the state for a site, and not one locality offered sufficient inducement to warrant the locating of a college . . . (and) the author of the act which caused the founding of agricultural colleges in so many other states had to confess a total failure in his own state."<sup>27</sup> Justin Morrill must have felt indeed like a "prophet" without honor in his own country!

The report of the Trustees of the Vermont Agricultural College to the legislature did more than confess failure to raise the \$100,000. It revealed, also, that new attempts had been made to sound out the other institutions in Vermont concerning a merger. Middlebury had rejected the proposal again. The Trustees of Norwich had opposed, reconsidered, and, in any case were without sufficient funds. Then, the Trustees of the Vermont Agricultural College turned to the University of Vermont which agreed to a union on condition that the University of Vermont be protected in its property and be promised a share of any future funds.<sup>28</sup> Thus the proposal for union in 1865 came *from* the Vermont Agricultural College and was accepted by the Trustees of the University of Vermont in spite of the opposition of its alumni.<sup>29</sup> It was the only possible solution in view of the failure to raise sufficient funds and the unwillingness of Norwich or Middlebury to make such a marriage.

Hence, the legislature of 1865 incorporated "the University of Vermont and the State Agricultural College." To this new corporation was transferred all of the property of the former University of Vermont and to it was granted the income accruing from the land grant.

The new Corporation was composed of twenty trustees, nine of whom were elected by the trustees of the original University of Vermont and were a self-perpetuating group within the Board. Nine more trustees were elected in the first instance by the Trustees of the Vermont Agricultural College but, thereafter, were to be chosen by

the legislature. The Governor of Vermont became an ex-officio member as did the President of the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College who was to be elected by the other nineteen Trustees.<sup>30</sup> This constituted an interesting adhesion of a self-perpetuating group of trustees within the tradition of the privately endowed University of Vermont on the one hand, and a group of public members under the control of the legislature, on the other.

Quite properly, the Trustees of the Vermont Agricultural College elected Justin S. Morrill to serve on the Board of the new corporation.<sup>31</sup> His presence on the Board for many years added prestige to the new institution, the more so after the importance of land grant colleges came to be realized in the United States. On the other hand, Edwin Hammond of Middlebury, who had led the agitation for a separate agricultural college in 1864, was elected to the Board "as a leading representative of the farming interest of the State," but he declined absolutely to serve.<sup>32</sup> This was an ominous indication that there were some leading farmers in the state who refused to be reconciled with the legislature's solution of the land grant college question.

Apparently, the newly organized institution was conscious of the persisting hostility of those who had opposed a union of the Agricultural College with the University of Vermont.<sup>33</sup> Dean Hills has summarized the situation in the first years of the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College as follows:

Knowing that Edwin Hammond and others who felt as he did were eyeing every movement made and noting those not made, effort was put forth to make as good a showing as possible in respect to student attendance on the agricultural side. The Trustee reports to the legislature, and catalogs '66-'69 listed 6, 5, 4 and 6 students in the "Agricultural and Scientific Departments," mostly "engineers," none of them "ags". In '67/'68, six medical students were listed as "agricultural and scientific students" . . . and a similar fictitious listing occurred in '69/'70. For long years, the word "agricultural" was made much of, but the most cursory study of catalogs clearly showed that students were engineers, chemists, "medics" and that no agriculturally-minded or trained men were on the teaching staff.<sup>34</sup>

This condition in the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College was by no means unique. Everywhere the land grant colleges were influenced by college standards then in vogue and faculties were drawn from the ranks of men trained in classical courses or the "pure" sciences. Time was needed to develop agricultural experimentation on a systematic basis and to train teachers of agricultural courses

before either the managers of land grant colleges or the farmers themselves would be satisfied with the results.<sup>35</sup>

But there were many farmers in Vermont who were impatient with the failure to develop a satisfactory agricultural program at the University in Burlington (already the wicked city to inhabitants of the rural areas of Vermont).<sup>36</sup> Open criticism was being expressed, at this time, by prominent farm leaders. In 1870, Zuar Jameson, Secretary of the Orleans County Agricultural Society, told a farmers' meeting at Glover that "the studies taught are not acceptable to the sons of toil and have no direct application to agriculture." President Angell came quickly to the defense of the University in a reply published in the *Burlington Free Press*. Angell pointed out that Jameson and other critics had never visited the University. He maintained, also, that instruction in the "sciences and their applications" was much better than instruction in the "manual details" of an industry. Moreover, Angell insisted that the University must have more funds to expand work in agriculture and to develop an experimental farm, reminding his readers that "Vermont is almost the only state in which neither the farmers nor the legislature have furnished any help to the agricultural college."<sup>37</sup> Jameson refused to be silenced and, in another published letter, hinted strongly that the legislature might do well to investigate the University and raised the question of "the separation of the fund" from the University.<sup>38</sup>

The legislature of 1870 ignored this suggestion to investigate the management of the land grant fund, but Jameson and other critics of the University continued their attacks. Moreover, Jameson was appointed to the new State Board of Agriculture in 1871 and his active work in the farmers' meetings held in various localities gave him an opportunity to sound out the opinion of farmers about the State Agricultural College. The Board of Agriculture, of course, preserved an officially discreet attitude towards the University and State Agricultural College—at least until 1874. In that year, Jameson had two new colleagues on the Board who sympathized with his attitude towards the University of Vermont, Dr. Thomas H. Hoskins of Newport, and Francis P. Douglas of Whiting. These three threw discretion to the winds and attacked the University of Vermont in a public meeting of the Board of Agriculture at Randolph. They charged that the farmers had been cheated out of their rights, that the land grant fund had been misapplied, that the farmers had been "outwitted" in 1865 and that a separate agricultural college could be set up easily.<sup>39</sup>

Such attacks from men in high places could not be ignored. The legislature of 1874 set up a joint special committee to investigate the management of the land grant fund. This committee discovered that the "Industrial Division" of the University consisted of four professors giving courses in Agriculture, chemistry, civil engineering, metallurgy, mathematics, laboratory practice, modern languages and English literature and, in addition, special winter courses of lectures on agricultural chemistry, botany, physics, entomology, farm accounts and bee culture. The Committee also reported that no demand from students had developed yet for practical and experimental agriculture, hence no money had been applied to the purchase of an experimental farm. Although the joint committee found it impossible to trace the expenditure of the "industrial fund," since it went into a common fund with the income from the endowment of the University, the report voiced its assurance that the whole of this "industrial fund" and "a little more" was spent for professors of the "industrial division."<sup>40</sup> Dr. Hoskins, in the *Vermont Watchman*, dismissed the report of the Committee as "simply a statement of the college side of the question" and hinted that the Committee had not given the farmers a chance to present their side of the argument.<sup>41</sup>

The Vermont State Grange was obviously not satisfied with this turn of events. E. P. Colton, Zuar Jameson's fellow townsman and brother Granger, told the 1875 meeting of the Grange in his capacity as State Master, that the time had come for the setting up of "a school . . . where the sons of the poorest farmers may secure a practical education and pay (in part) . . . in labor . . . and work on a farm." His suggestion was endorsed by the education committee of the State Grange.<sup>42</sup> These activities of the politically conscious State Grange presaged more trouble for the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College in the next biennial session of the legislature. Probably sensing that a political storm was brewing, the University sought to strengthen its defenses by improving the program offered in the field of agriculture. Early in October, 1876, the Trustees engaged New England's most outstanding veterinarian, Professor Noah Cressy, to give a course of fifty lectures in veterinary medicine, part of them to be delivered to the students of the University and the rest in various localities in the state.<sup>43</sup> This was a very timely move—virtually coinciding with the introduction of a resolution in the House of Representatives calling for a new investigation of the State Agricultural College.<sup>44</sup> The rejection of this resolution by the House was undoubtedly influenced by the evidence of the University's willing-

ness to give more recognition to the claims of the farmers. The militant farmers, of course, were still not prepared to accept anything less than a separate agricultural college.

The agitation of new issues often creates opportunities for more rapid advancement by the politically ambitious. In 1878, Justin Morrill's second term as Senator was due to expire and there was a prominent political leader who was anxious to contest the reelection of Morrill. This was Judge Luke P. Poland of St. Johnsbury, sometimes known as "Brass Buttons" because of his fondness for great blue coats with brass buttons. Poland was the stormy petrel of this period of Vermont politics and had held many state offices including the Chief Justiceship of the State Supreme Court. Poland also had an old political score to settle with Morrill because Morrill had defeated him for election to the Senate in 1866.<sup>45</sup>

Poland was in a good position to improve his chances in 1878. He was a member of the legislature which would bestow the Senatorial toga and in a good position to make himself a conspicuous champion of the farmers' rights. At the very start of the legislative session of 1878, Poland introduced a resolution asking that the House Judiciary Committee be given full powers to investigate the University of Vermont and the State Agricultural College since the land grant income had been "wholly perverted and the plighted faith of the State in accepting said trust violated."<sup>46</sup> This was followed up by his introduction of a bill to amend the act incorporating the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College so as to permit any ten or more citizens who claimed that the University of Vermont had failed to carry out the requirements of its charter to begin proceedings to have the matter inquired into and determined by the State Supreme Court. *Pending any such inquiry, the State Treasurer was to be restrained from making payments of land grant income to the University.* The prompt passage of this bill by the House placed the University in a precarious position since any ten anti-University men could begin proceedings at any time, and many times, thus tying up the income of the land grant fund indefinitely.<sup>47</sup> In addition to these legislative maneuvers, Judge Poland charged, in a campaign speech, that Morrill and his fellow trustees of the University of Vermont were guilty of a breach of trust in the use of the funds of the University.<sup>48</sup>

These exciting developments produced a very spirited campaign. A furious battle of letters and editorials developed in the leading newspapers of Vermont in which the charges of fraud were countered by charges of political chicanery.<sup>49</sup> Morrill, himself, found it advisable

to make efforts he had never made before in his political career. "He attended the State Fair at St. Albans, admired the farmers' stock, kissed the babies, and tempted indigestion by tasting the housewives' bread, cake, and pies in the floral hall." In addition, the Senator favored the Vermont Dairymen's Association with an address at its Montpelier meeting.<sup>50</sup> As the friends of Morrill (and the University) rallied their forces, Poland's ambitious efforts backfired, one by one. His accusatory resolution died in committee;<sup>51</sup> the Senate amended the House bill by striking out the provision which would have tied up the income of the land grant fund and requiring that any complaint against the University must be verified by the oath of one of the complainants *who must also enter a recognizance for the payment of costs to the University in case costs should be adjudged in the failure of prosecution.*<sup>52</sup> When it became clear that Morrill was going to be reelected by an overwhelming majority, Poland withdrew from the contest and Morrill enjoyed a spectacular triumph in the only serious attempt in his whole career to capture his senatorial seat.<sup>53</sup>

The narrow escape of the University in 1878 spurred its administration to make more strenuous efforts to "reach and teach" the farmers. Some of the Agricultural College instructors took part in farmers' institutes and two of the most noted agricultural teachers in New England were hired for the year—Dr. Noah Cressy to lecture on animal diseases and Dr. W. O. Atwater of Wesleyan University (Conn.) to conduct a series of plot fertilizer trials throughout the state. For two years, also, the University offered prizes to young farmers in Vermont for growing the best corn and potatoes. Special winter courses were offered at the University, attended largely, of course, by farmers from the nearby towns only. Nevertheless, little was done to improve and expand the work at the State Agricultural College in any fundamental way and the "agricultural doldrums" continued at the University during the eighties.<sup>54</sup>

Although a similar stagnant condition prevailed in most of the agricultural colleges of this period, there were many signs of an awakening outside of Vermont. A desire to improve the work of the land grant colleges had led to a meeting in Chicago, in 1871, of the presidents and professors of State Agricultural Colleges. Only a few land grant colleges sent delegates and the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College was among those which did not share the pioneering impulse. The consensus of this Chicago meeting was that more experimental work should be carried on in agricultural education

and that state legislatures and Congress should be memorialized concerning the need of at least one experiment station in every state.<sup>55</sup>

Several months after the Chicago meeting, United States Commissioner of Agriculture Watts issued a call for another convention to be held in Washington and to which he invited delegates from State Agricultural Colleges, state Boards of Agriculture and state Agricultural Societies. This convention was well attended with representatives of 32 states and three territories present. Senator Morrill took an active part by presenting a resolution calling upon Congress to make an additional donation of land, or proceeds of land to the states "to found a professorship of some of the branches of practical science" in each of the colleges. It was at this time that Morrill began his eighteen year battle in Congress to obtain additional funds for the land grant colleges. In addition to adopting Morrill's resolution, the Washington convention appointed a committee to study further the feasibility of establishing experiment stations in the United States.<sup>56</sup>

In the next few years, the first state agricultural experiment stations were established. The earliest of these was founded at Wesleyan University, (Middletown, Conn.) in 1875, by Professor W. O. Atwater who had already made an outstanding reputation in New England as a teacher of practical agriculture. Other stations of the same type appeared in New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, California and almost a dozen other states in the next ten years.<sup>57</sup> A series of national agricultural conventions kept the subject of agricultural experimentation very much alive and, in 1883, a convention held in Washington adopted a resolution offered by President Seaman A. Knapp of Iowa Agricultural College endorsing the bill of Congressman Carpenter of Iowa for the establishment of federally-subsidized state experiment stations in connection with State Agricultural Colleges. By this time the National Grange and other agricultural organizations were supporting such legislation and it was only a matter of time before an experiment station act would be received from Congress.<sup>58</sup>

In Vermont, there were evidences of interest in agricultural experiment stations as early as 1876. In that year, the Secretary of the Board of Agriculture, Dr. Henry M. Seely, Professor of Chemistry at Middlebury College, urged the Board to follow the lead of Connecticut in the establishment of an experiment station. The Board voted, somewhat grandiloquently, to establish "the second agricultural experiment station on this continent." Dr. Seely was made its "superintendent" with full powers to make investigations and experiments

“without remuneration” and “without expense to the Board or State.” Six months later, Dr. Seely confessed that lack of time and funds had made it possible to issue only a bulletin of “facts in regard to fertilizers.” Poor health made it impossible for him to do much during the next year although he recruited the services of the University of Vermont professors who produced five more fertilizer analyses and articles on injurious insects. Thus ended an experiment station which never really began.<sup>59</sup>

In 1883, the State Grange revived the idea with a resolution favoring the setting up of a state experimental station. Moreover, in the 1884 session of the legislature, the Worthy Master of the State Grange, Colonel A. B. Franklin, introduced a bill in the House of Representatives (of which he was a member) to establish such an experiment station to be supported by annual appropriations of \$3,000. Notwithstanding a flood of petitions in its favor, the bill was rejected.<sup>60</sup>

All of this time, the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College was apparently immune to the contagion of agricultural experimentation. The action of the State Grange in 1885, however, spurred the University administration to develop an interest in the subject. In that year, the Grange adopted a resolution charging that “the farmers of Vermont have received no adequate returns or benefits from the government fund for the establishment of agricultural colleges” and that the fund was being used by the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College” for purposes not in accordance with the spirit of the law” and virtually demanding that the Trustees set aside and use a portion of the fund to establish an “experimental station” in the state. Moreover, in another resolution, the Grange promised “to use its influence in the election of a majority of representative farmers as Trustees of the said fund.”<sup>61</sup> Scarcely a year later, in the next biennial session of the legislature, the University administration appointed, for the first time, a Professor of Agriculture. Also, in their report to the legislature, the University Trustees suggested the creation and endowment of a state agricultural experiment station.

The recommendation of the University Trustees was supported by Governor Ebenezer J. Ormsbee in his message to the legislature.<sup>62</sup> Representative Luke Poland introduced a bill to establish an experiment station prepared with the aid of the University’s new Professor of Agriculture, Wells W. Cooke. The readiness with which both houses of the legislature passed this bill providing \$3,500 for experiment station expenses was stimulated, perhaps, by the certainty of

federal aid within a short time. The new station, provided for in the bill, was to be established in Burlington with the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College, although supervision was to be by a separate board of control whose chairman, however, was the University President.<sup>63</sup> The University, therefore, had its first real opportunity in thirty-four years to develop a satisfactory program of agricultural education.

Unfortunately for the University, these changes came too late. The smoldering opposition of farm groups toward the University flared up again in 1888 and, by 1890, was raging in full fury. The Grange, by then a powerful political pressure group, attacked the University again in its annual meeting of 1888 and made preparations to mobilize the farmers in all parts of the state through the local Granges.<sup>64</sup> In the legislative session of that year, a joint committee composed of the Senate and House Committees on Agriculture was ordered to visit the Agricultural College and Experiment Station "and report by bill or otherwise." The Committee chose to report otherwise than by bill and its conclusions were not unfavorable to the University. On the other hand, there was an ambiguity in one of its most important statements which may have been a portent of things to come. This was the conclusion that "If, as is claimed, the Agricultural Department of the institution has proved to be a failure, it is through no fault of the management, but rather for the reason that our young men decline to take an agricultural course *in connection with those who are pursuing a classical one.*"<sup>65</sup> That some of the committee members were thinking of separation when this report was drafted is very likely in view of the near success of a House resolution recommending the study of the advisability of establishing a separate "school of agriculture."<sup>66</sup>

At the same time, friends of the University were seeking more funds from the State in order to expand the work in agriculture. Governor Dillingham called the attention of the General Assembly to the report of the Trustees of the University which had emphasized the necessity of "liberal grants" from the State if the University was to accomplish "the great and difficult work of adding to the ancient curriculum the large array of new sciences with their applications, with which modern invention has enhanced human knowledge."<sup>67</sup> Senator Morrill, himself, made a similar plea in a public address delivered in Montpelier during the legislative session in which he reminded his hearers that Vermont was the only state which had not made a liberal appropriation for its State Agricultural College.<sup>68</sup>

These appeals failed to win any sympathy from the majority of the legislators and the University was left to work with what resources it had.

The long standing controversy broke out in a most violent form two years later. Senator Morrill, quite unwittingly, contributed to the decision of farmer groups to demand a separate agricultural college. In the summer of 1890, Congress passed the second Morrill Act to give further aid to the land grant colleges by an appropriation of \$15,000 to each state and an annual increase of this sum by \$1,000 until the annual appropriation reached \$25,000. Senator Morrill may have had the situation in his own state in mind when he introduced the bill for he said, during the debate in the Senate, that larger funds were necessary to equip the land grant colleges; that "something more than a blackboard and a piece of chalk is wanted. . . . The branches of scientific learning have been greatly multiplied and expanded in modern days and there is a public . . . demand for them which these colleges must supply at whatever cost."<sup>69</sup> The news of the passage of this bill heartened the proponents of a separate agricultural college in Vermont. They began to calculate that the new federal grant of \$15,000 a year, together with the land grant income of \$8,130 annually, and the Hatch Act appropriation of \$15,000 annually in aid of State Experiment Stations would make the creation of a separate agricultural school, with the experiment station subjoined, financially feasible.<sup>70</sup> This was something that Senator Morrill had not bargained for!

Yet the great upheaval in Vermont in 1890 cannot be accounted for merely by reference to the encouragement of additional federal subsidies. The attack on the University in 1890 was of a well organized and strongly emotional character which indicated the influence of good leadership, careful preparations and skillful propaganda. The catalytic factor in this precipitate uprising in 1890 was the activity of the *New England Homestead*, of Springfield, Massachusetts, New England's leading agricultural periodical. *The Homestead* had become the unofficial spokesman of the Grange and was already widely read in the farm homes of New England. At this time, the *Homestead* had come under the aggressive editorship of Herbert Myrick, a graduate of Massachusetts Agricultural College, and ambitious to become the leader of a farmers' political movement.<sup>71</sup> In 1889, Myrick organized a Farmers' League" in Massachusetts "to secure justice" through the ballot box. In January of 1890, Myrick met with farm leaders of neighboring states and launched the National Farmers' League to

unite the activities of state leagues on the model of the Massachusetts League.<sup>72</sup> This eastern farmers' league, like those of the west and south in this period of unrest, grew up very rapidly in the spring and summer of 1890. At the first regular meeting of the National Farmers' League in Albany, on September 1, 1890, it was reported that State leagues had been "perfected" in Massachusetts, Maine, Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania, and that others were "well under way" in Vermont and New Hampshire.<sup>73</sup>

The object of the Farmers' League was "to advance the farmers' political welfare, securing to him due recognition and just representation in all elective and appointive offices affecting his welfare, without conflicting with the best interest of the entire people."<sup>74</sup> This new league fought for legislation restricting the sale of oleomargarine in Massachusetts,<sup>75</sup> an "equal tax law" in New York<sup>76</sup> and in June of 1890, the *Homestead* began beating the drums for a "complete divorce" of the Agricultural Colleges in Vermont and New Hampshire "from the literary institutions with which they have been connected."<sup>77</sup> At the same time, the organization of local leagues was being pushed in Vermont, eventuating in the creation of a state Farmers' League in October, headed by E. P. Colton of Irasburgh, who, several years before as Worthy Master of the Grange, had attacked the administration of the State Agricultural College. This "perfected" state League made the establishment of a separate agricultural college the main point in its program.<sup>78</sup> By the time the legislature assembled, the local farmers' leagues, the Granges and most of the rural weeklies in Vermont were clamoring for "separation."<sup>79</sup>

Greatly alarmed, the University Administration made defensive preparations. As early as September 8, President Buckham had instructed Professor of Agriculture, Cooke, to see that lecture rooms, farm buildings and equipment were in the best possible condition "in anticipation of a visit from some legislative committee."<sup>80</sup> On the eve of the meeting of the legislature, the University staged a "formal opening," with great fanfare, of the agricultural course for the year. At these exercises, President Buckham promised the agricultural students that the Trustees would consider the purchase of a farm nearer the University, provide new equipment, and erect a dormitory building for agricultural students.<sup>81</sup> Also, friends of the University used their influence effectively behind the scenes to gain control of the strategic committees in the House and Senate.<sup>82</sup>

When the anticipated bill to separate the State Agricultural College was introduced the supporters of the University brought up their

strongest guns to flatten the opposition. Among those who testified against the separation measure in the hearings of the House Committee on Education were Senator Morrill and President Buckham, both men of great prestige in Vermont. Senator Morrill characterized the attempt to set up a separate agricultural school as a "revolution and subversive of the whole idea of the land grant act of 1862." He insisted that the land grant act "was of a much broader kind" and that "it included, to be sure, the idea that agriculture and the mechanic arts were to have a leading or first position, but it also included much more. It was for the industrial classes to promote their instruction *generally*, and it was not to exclude even the classics."<sup>83</sup> President Buckham's testimony was a masterpiece of argumentation. This dignified classical scholar, skilled in the art of expression, insisted that the University had taken over the State Agricultural College in 1865 "with reluctance" and had done so only to save the land grant fund for Vermont. He maintained that the University had always understood that this was a permanent arrangement exempt from future legislative changes. He scorned the bill before the legislature as one which would "give our Legislature the power to trundle this institution about the state." The erudite President denied emphatically that the agricultural students were looked down on—he had asked them himself (!) and they had answered in the negative. He made much of the high cost of providing faculty, buildings, equipment and books as a warning to those who would establish a separate institution.<sup>84</sup>

The inescapable questions involved in the move to separate the State Agricultural College were elaborated in an excellent editorial in the *Burlington Free Press* entitled "Look at the Folly of It." The *Free Press* minced no words when it asserted that "a new Agricultural College can only be established in Vermont by a breach of faith on the part of the State towards the state institutions, such as no honorable citizen should consent to be a party to." In telling fashion, the editorial enumerated the items of expense in establishing a college, concluding, "To make a fair start in competition with the University and State Agricultural College and with the agricultural colleges of New Hampshire and Massachusetts, which are close at our doors, the new college must have its scholarships, its library, its fund for assistance to needy students, its gymnasium and other attractions which draw the farmers' boys to the existing colleges. Where are these to come from?"<sup>85</sup>

The proponents of separation were represented before the House

Committee on Education by the leaders of the most powerful agricultural organizations in Vermont. Alpha Messer, the Master of the State Grange, expressed his organization's long standing hostility to the University when he accused it of not having granted a single diploma in the agricultural course in the preceding five years in spite of the additional federal subsidy under the Hatch Act and appropriations from the State.<sup>86</sup> This charge was reiterated in language rich in metaphors by William Chapin, member of the Board of Agriculture, who told the Committee, "That barren fig tree of a so-called agricultural college has been 'digger about and dunger' with liberal gifts from State and Nation till it fairly stinks, and yet no fruit."<sup>87</sup> The Secretary of the Vermont Dairymen's Association, E. L. Bass, also added his voice to the demand for separation.<sup>88</sup>

Although the strategy of the opponents of the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College was to concentrate on the obvious failure of the University to provide an adequate agricultural course and to attract students, some attempt was made to meet the arguments of the friends of the University concerning the financing of a separate institution. In his statement to the Committee on Education, Alpha Messer argued that \$40,000 to \$50,000 would be enough to sustain a separate agricultural school.<sup>89</sup> The amounts named, of course, approximated the total federal subsidy under the Hatch Act, the second Morrill Act and the income from the original land grant fund. The *New England Homestead* made the financial problem seem very simple, in an editorial "To the People of Vermont," by suggesting that some town could offer \$25,000 to \$50,000 for a site and buildings. This financial wizardry so impressed the editorial writer of the *Homestead* (presumably Myrick) that he concluded with the outburst, "The new and legitimate Vermont Agricultural and Mechanical College and experiment station, all hail!"<sup>90</sup> The editorial had its effect, however, for a group of leading citizens of Rutland pledged \$50,000 in aid of the Agricultural and Mechanical College "if the same is located permanently in the town of Rutland."<sup>91</sup>

At first, the forces behind the separation bill seemed to be irresistible. The House Committee on Education, aware of the hostile sentiments of House members, towards the University did its part to check the irresistible force by holding the bill in Committee for more than three weeks. A compromise solution presented itself on November 16, 1890, when C. M. Winslow, a member of the Board of Directors of the State Agricultural Society, proposed a plan to reorganize the Board of Trustees of the State Agricultural College.